

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5235

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Law & Justice, January 26, 1995  
Ways & Means, February 16, 1995

**Title:** An act relating to superior court judges.

**Brief Description:** Adding a superior court judge in Clark county.

**Sponsors:** Senators Bauer, Sutherland, Palmer and Smith.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Law & Justice: 1/26/95 [DPS].  
Ways & Means: 2/15/95, 2/16/95 [DP2S].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5235 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Smith, Chair; C. Anderson, Vice Chair; Hargrove, Haugen, Johnson, Long, McCaslin, Roach and Schow.

**Staff:** Dick Armstrong (786-7460)

**Background:** By statute the Legislature determines the number of superior court judges in each county. Clark County currently has six superior court judges. The county has experienced growth in the number of cases filed and tried in its superior court.

The Washington State Administrator for the Courts has conducted a "weighted caseload" study and estimates that Clark County needs additional superior court judges to handle the current caseload.

The Washington State Constitution provides that the state and counties should share the salary expense for superior court judges. Other costs associated with a judicial position, such as capital and support staff cost, are borne by the county.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** An additional superior court judge is authorized for Clark County, increasing the number of superior court judges in Clark County from six to seven. Clark County is responsible for the costs associated with the additional judicial position.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The original bill was not considered.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 20, 1995.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** Clark County is in great need of another superior court judge.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Judge Robert Harris, Judge Thomas Lodge, Clark County; Kurt Sharar, Washington State Association of Counties.

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Majority Report:** That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5235 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Rinehart, Chair; Loveland, Vice Chair; Bauer, Cantu, Drew, Finkbeiner, Fraser, Gaspard, Hargrove, Hochstatter, Johnson, Long, Moyer, Roach, Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Sutherland, West and Winsley.

**Staff:** Linda Brownell (786-7913)

**Second Substitute Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:** The appropriate reference to state law or the Constitution is made when referencing what costs will be paid by counties and local governments.

**Testimony For:** The county needs an additional superior court judge. The last one was added in 1987, and Clark County is one of the fastest growing counties of over 250,000 people. There has been a 40 percent caseload increase and while the court is doing everything possible to be efficient, it has exhausted all alternatives. Clark County commissioners have written a letter of support and will provide funding of about \$126,000 per year.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Judge Tom Lodge, Superior Court, Clark County (pro).